

ARCTIC COOPERATION

ISSUE

This latest draft Agreement on Arctic cooperation broadens Russia's December proposal on Arctic radioactive waste issues to include all contaminants. The U.S. counterproposal in January strengthened language concerning access to dump sites but was rejected by Russia.

BACKGROUND

The Administration has approved a U.S. policy for the Arctic region. Among other thrusts, the policy calls on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to work with relevant U.S. agencies through the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) to produce an integrated national program of research, monitoring, assessments, and priority-setting related to pollutants in the Arctic region. The IARPC was established by the Arctic Research and Policy Act, P.L. 98-373 and P.L. 101-609.

IARPC has prepared an initiative on Arctic contamination. Funds are proposed to support research and assessment programs in the Dept. of the Interior, Dept. of Energy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Science Foundation. These agencies have prepared the initiative on the basis that adequate new funding would be provided through the budget and planning process.

The initiative has been prepared partly in response to the new policy and to address environmental and strategic issues affecting U.S. and international policy.

We have been seeking to develop cooperative activities with Russia on Arctic issues in regional and bilateral fields. In 1991, the U.S., Russia and six other Arctic nations, agreed on the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. A primary objective of the Strategy is to secure ongoing Russian involvement, particularly in light of the extent of pollution resulting from past Soviet toxic waste and nuclear disposal. Arctic countries are currently cooperating on four Strategy Working Groups:

- AMAP - the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program,
- Measures to respond to pollution emergencies,
- Conservation of Arctic fauna and flora, and
- Arctic marine pollution cooperation.

The Strategy identifies six pollution threats requiring urgent attention:

- Persistent organic contaminants
- Oil pollution

- Heavy metals
- Noise
- Radioactivity
- Acidification

A bilateral Agreement would strengthen regional efforts. This proposal includes cooperation in data collection, assessment, access to contaminated sites and activities to prevent, reduce and control pollution.

U.S. POSITION

We propose addressing overall Arctic contamination and radioactive waste issues separately. Arctic radioactive waste is a contaminant which can be addressed in the proposal, but is not to be the specific focus. That issue would be pursued in multilateral fora due to: 1) the concerns of other countries, notably Norway and Japan, 2) the global nature of the problem, and 3) the depth of expertise in international organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the London Convention. An agreement on contaminants fits well in the Arctic Strategy and U.S. initiatives. The overall bilateral agenda on the Arctic will ultimately extend beyond environmental monitoring to specific measures to conserve wildlife and protect habitat. It is essential that these programs be well-coordinated with overall Russian assistance programs.

TALKING POINTS

[See Administrator's talking points for 6/23 Environment Committee session.]

DRAFT: DOS/OES/OA: RArnaudo
CLEAR: NSF/DPP: CMyers
 DOI/USGS/OIG: BMolnia
 DOS/EUR/ISCA: RFerguson-Augustus
 DOS/OES/ENV: KThomas
 DOS/G: MSchneider
 DOS/OES/ETC: JVanderwalker
 USDA/FS/IF: DHarcharik
 DOI/OIA: RD'Allesandro
 DOI/NPS: RCook
 DOI/FWS/IA: SKohl